General Tips for the New MEERTS (Feb ’05)

Proofreading

Duty Officers need to take an active role in making sure that their reports are accurate and free of mistakes. Duty Officers should proofread each draft report after it has been printed and before it has been put in the ICC in-basket. This is especially important since Duty Officers no longer review and sign a final copy. Duty Officers may be asked to correct their own mistakes if reviewers later find significant errors on a draft report.

Abbreviations, Caps, etc.

- The following abbreviations are acceptable to use anywhere in the form:

  MO, US, PO Box, EER, Blvd, Apt, Dept, Corp, Inc, I-44 (rather than Interstate 44), Co (for Company, but <u>not</u> for County)

  It is also acceptable to use working titles, especially military/law enforcement titles (e.g., Sgt, Det, Cpl).

  Do not use Mr, Mrs, or Ms <u>unless</u> the caller’s first name is unknown. For example, it’s okay to enter <u>Mr</u> Adams if you don’t have his first name. But if the caller is John Adams, do not enter Mr. John Adams.

  When you use an abbreviation, <u>do</u> <u>not</u> use a period (e.g. use “US”, not “U.S.”, and “PO Box”, rather than P.O. Box).

- Attempt to spell out all other words throughout the form, with the exception of the “Additional Information” tab. Any other common abbreviations and acronyms may be used in the “Additional Information” tab of the form.

- Do not use all caps. Type as you normally would when writing any other correspondence.

Interstates, Highways, Routes, Streets, etc.

- Interstate Highways should be designated as I-44, I-70, etc.

- Numbered state highways should be designated as Highway 50, Highway 21, etc.

- Lettered state routes should be designated as Route B, Route AA, etc.

- For all other roads, streets, avenues, boulevards, simply use whatever the caller reports.

- For numbered streets, avenues, etc., spell out the word up to tenth street (e.g., First Street, Second Avenue, Fifth Street, Tenth Avenue). Use numeric designations for street numbers above tenth (e.g. 23rd Street, 51st Street)

- Example: Use I-44 West or I-29 North when describing the direction that a vehicle was heading. Omit the word “bound” – it is extraneous.

Tab 1 – Caller/PRP Information

- If you know the name of the organization, but not a contact within the organization, just type "Unknown" in the contact name field and enter the name of the organization in the correct field. (Note: Due to the autofill feature, when "Unknown" is entered, the organization/address/phone number for a previously entered "Unknown" contact will automatically be entered into the field. The duty officer will need to double-click on the address line – just below the "Organization" field – and edit the information).

- The "report origin" field is related to the person that called the EER (or an NRC fax if that is the case). It is not the "reported to caller by" contact, if there is one.

- For NRC faxes, the duty officer should just enter "Fax" in the contact name. A dialog box will pop up asking for the NRC Fax report number. The rest of the NRC contact information will autofill and the NRC fax report number will automatically be placed in the Additional Information (Tab 3) field.

Tab 2 – Incident Details

- If the location of the incident is not known (as is the case sometimes with meth reports), enter "Undisclosed Location" in the incident location field.

- Latitude and longitude are not yellow "mandatory" fields because if the internet is inaccessible and lat/long cannot be determined, then a duty officer would be unable to "save" a spill report. To avoid that problem, lat/long are not "mandatory" fields. However, latitude and longitude are still required and must eventually be determined and entered before a report is considered final.

- The "E-mail" box – This box should be checked any time that a notification e-mail is written except for those that are automatically sent for Complaints, Abandoned Containers, and Mercury Pickups. In addition, the duty officer must staple a copy of the notification e-mail to the draft report (again, this applies to all e-mails except for those that are automatically sent for Complaints, etc.). The notification e-mails are an important piece of documentation that needs to be attached to an incident report.

Abandoned Containers/Mercury Pickups/Complaints

- When the Abandoned Container box is checked, MEERTS will automatically send a notification email to Route 66-EER (the Unit Chief and the Support Staff), the Duty Officer who took the report and the OSC. Therefore, it is essential for the Duty Officer to determine the OSC prior to completing an abandoned container report. If the abandoned container is located in SLRO, then it is acceptable to select "Route 66" as the Duty Officer. In any other region, the Duty Officer will need to determine an OSC. Consequently, the Duty Officer will no longer have to create a PDF file of the report and send an email to Route 66-EER, et.al. MEERTS will also automatically add "Route 66-EER" to the "Persons Notified" section (Tab 7). The e-mail does not need to be attached to the spill report.

- Mercury Pickups – For mercury pickups, duty officers should not check the "abandoned container" box. Instead, the Incident Cause code "211 – Mercury Pickup" should be selected. Code 211 will also automatically send a notification email to Route 66-EER (the Unit Chief and the Support Staff), the Duty Officer who took the report and the OSC. Therefore, it is essential for the Duty Officer to determine the OSC prior to completing a mercury pickup report. MEERTS will also automatically add "Route 66-EER" to the "Persons Notified" section (Tab 7). The e-mail does not need to be attached to the spill report.

- Complaint Box – When a complaint is received and needs to be referred to a regional office for followup, duty officers should check the "Complaint" box. This will automatically generate an email that will be sent to the appropriate Regional Director, their second-in-command, the appropriate regional EER staff, and the Duty Officer. It will also automatically add the Regional Director to the "Persons Notified" section (Tab 7) of the form. The e-mail does not need to be attached to the spill report.

  What constitutes a "complaint" and when should the "complaint" box be checked? A complaint is typically an allegation made by a third party (sometimes anonymous) about someone or some organization that is causing an environmental problem due to improper disposal, dumping, waste handling procedures, etc. A responsible party reporting a spill is usually not a "complaint". In addition, a "complaint" involves something that does not warrant an immediate response by the regional office staff. For example, if a citizen reports that a creek downstream of a CAFO is red and odorous, then the issue is more urgent and not considered a "complaint". In this case, the duty officer would immediately notify the appropriate regional office via the telephone.

Tab 3 - Additional Information

- Since there is no longer a narrative Incident Summary or Response Summary, it may be necessary to further describe the incident in the Additional Information tab. This is a mandatory field, so something must be typed in this space in order for the report to be "saved". Reminder – use spell check (F7 key) when finished writing in this field. Duty Officers have an unlimited amount of space to describe and document the incident in this section and are encouraged to provide enough details to "tell the story" – one exception to this rule is for routine meth labs where there typically is no "story" to tell. There is an autofill feature set up for meth reports that makes an entry (the collection station's tracking number) into this "mandatory" field so nothing further needs to be added by the duty officer.

Tab 4 – Medium Affected

- The main tip for this section – don't' forget to click the "add medium affected" button after selecting the proper medium affected code. Be sure to add all the media that are affected.

Tab 5 – Chemical Information

- The Duty Officer can add as many chemicals as needed in this section. Please capitalize the first letter in the chemical name when entering a chemical (e.g., Diesel Fuel).

- After a chemical and quantity (e.g., could be unknown) has been entered and the report has been saved, the duty officer can edit the report and make any changes needed to the chemical name or quantity. Both the original chemical name and quantity are saved in the system as well as the newly edited information. Although the original information does not appear on the report as viewed in MEERTS, both the original and edited information appear on a printed version of the report. Always edit a chemical name/quantity by double-clicking on the chemical to make it move back up into the entry field where the information can be changed as needed. <u>Do</u> <u>not</u> edit a chemical name or quantity by making a new entry – always double-click on the existing chemical to move it back into the entry field for editing and then click the "add this chemical" button when finished.

- For approximate quantities, use the ~ sign. Do not try to list a range (e.g., 70-100 gallons).

<u>Tab 6 – Response Actions</u>

- Don't forget to click the "add" button after selecting the most appropriate code or codes (more than one can be selected).

- After selecting response action code(s), the duty officer must also select one or more agencies or parties that are <u>actively</u> involved in the response action. The only exception to this rule is if "no release" or "not practical" are selected. For those two entries, there is no entry required (or possible) for an agency involved in the response since there is essentially no response needed.

  Note: to be actively involved in a response, an agency or entity must be on-scene and performing some type of work. For example, a tractor-trailer crashes and releases 100 gallons of diesel fuel. MDOT responds to spread some sand on the spill. A fire department responds and installs some earthen berms. The RP hires a contractor to excavate some contaminated soil. The EER responds to oversee the entire operation, but does not physically contribute to the cleanup. The agencies listed under response actions would be MDOT, Local Fire, and the Private – Responsible Party Contractor. If the EER staff contributed some sorbent pads to the cleanup operation, then the EER would also be listed.

<u>Tab 7 – Persons Notified</u>

- This field should be used to document people and agencies that a duty officer notified when working on an incident. Other agencies, regional office staff (both EER and non-EER), responsible parties, etc. should be included if applicable. It is implied that the notification was made by telephone. If the notification was via e-mail, or fax, then it should be documented by typing (e-mail) or (fax), respectively, after the person's name that was notified.

- In several cases, people/agencies will be autofilled here based upon programming in MEERTS. For example, the appropriate Regional Director will automatically be listed here when the "complaint" box is checked.

<u>Tab 8 – Responding Agencies</u>

- Don't forget to click the "add responding agent" button after selecting an agent.

- The duty officer should only add a responding agent to this field if it is certain that an agency has either responded (e.g., Highway Patrol on the scene of an accident), or there has been a commitment to respond (e.g., MDOC agent states that a response will be made). Do not list a responding agent if it is unknown whether or not an actual on-scene response will be made (e.g., a routine complaint that is referred to a regional office). There is room in this field to list as many response agencies as needed.

- All known responding agencies and parties should be listed in this section, including local responders, responsible parties and their contractors, and all state and federal response agencies.

- **What defines an "immediate" response versus "delayed"?** Generally if a response is made within a day, it should be considered "immediate". For example, if a duty officer receives a report of a tractor-trailer accident at 0300 hours and waits until the arrival of daylight and a cleanup contractor at 1100 hours to send a regional EER responder, the response would be considered "immediate". A clear example of a "delayed" response would be a mercury pickup that occurred a week after the report was received.

Tabs 9 (Referral Actions) and 10 (Report Distribution)
These two tabs are discussed together because they are related but not the same.

- An agency is listed under the referral action only when the EER refers an incident to an agency with the expectation that the referral agency is going to investigate. An agency is listed under the report distribution when the incident may affect or fall under the authority of the agency – the agency may not necessarily do anything in response to the report. Any agency listed under referral action will be autofilled in the report distribution section. For example, a report of a fish kill should be referred to the MO Dept of Conservation for an investigation. The report would be automatically distributed to the MDOC and the appropriate regional office (as always). The duty officer would also add the WPP Water Pollution Branch since a waterway was affected.

Tracking Field Responses

It is no longer necessary to record basic incident information on the Incident Response Log that had hung in the ICC and used to track EER Field Reports. That information is now being compiled from MEERTS data and sent to the EER Unit Chief for tracking.

Signing Reports

- The Duty Officer will no longer need to sign a final report.

Editing Reports

- Once a report has been entered, the Duty Officer may edit the report at any time. However, after one week from the date of the report, the EER Support Staff will be automatically notified via email any time that a report is edited. Any time that a Duty Officer edits a report, the Duty Officer should print the revised report and write somewhere on the front page of the report the word "Revised" and place the report in the out-basket in the ICC. It is important that the report in MEERTS is the same as the printed final report. This procedure will help ensure that any edited reports are printed and placed in the files.

<u>Codes</u>

Duty Officers are encouraged to use the hard copy of the Code Sheet that is provided in the Duty Officer Manual when entering a report and selecting codes. Duty Officers may find that using the hard copy is easier to locate the most appropriate codes, especially since there are many examples provided on the hard copy that are not found on the drop-down menus.

- All of the numerical codes have been changed from the old MEERTS, so do not rely on memory of old codes (e.g. EER-ESP is no longer code 791). Also, the codes have been put in alphabetical order.

- Property Use Codes – The Property Use Codes should be considered as either the use of the facility (tractor-trailer, property, utility, etc.) or the source that caused the release. For example, if a tractor-trailer runs off the road and crashes into a convenience store rupturing both saddle tanks as well as destroying the dispenser – is the property use code 120 "Road/Highway/ROW" or 106 "Convenience Store/Gas Station"? In this case, the proper code is 120 since the tractor-trailer was travelling on the road seconds before crashing into the convenience store. Another example, if a sewage release impacts a waterway, is the property use 122 "Sewer/WWTF" or 127 "Water/Waterway/Marina"? Using the same logic, the correct answer is 122 since the sewer was the source.

- Response Action Codes – The name of this group was changed from Cleanup Codes, since not all of the terms applied to clean up. Several codes were either eliminated (e.g. stabilized), or grouped together (e.g. containerized/overpacked).

- Material Codes – These codes have been grouped into several more logical classes. You may note that some of the same codes are found in more than one group (e.g., 636 "Processed Oil" is found under the Agriculture group and the Petroleum/Oil group). This was done simply to help Duty Officers find the right code. Many of these codes have examples that should help in selecting the most appropriate code.

- Agency Codes – These codes have been updated to reflect name changes and are better organized.

- Unit Codes – A few unit codes were eliminated since they were never used (e.g. picocuries and cubic feet/second).

- Incident Cause – Some codes were eliminated. For example, abandoned container was eliminated as a code because it has a separate checkbox on the form. The incident cause for an abandoned container would be 207 "Improper Disposal". Other codes were added or expanded upon using subcategories.

- Medium Affected – Just a few changes were made to this group.